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Problems At The BMV, Twice

The most frequent complaint I hear from constituents these days is that it takes too long to get service at the local license branch. I have received several complaints over the past few weeks, and in fact have experienced this twice myself recently - once when renewing my drivers license and a second time after purchasing a new car. Both times I was at the license branch for over two hours. **No private enterprise would stay in business for two days providing that kind of service!**

You may recall that for a number of years AAA/Hoosier Motor Club was able to offer license branch services to its members in central Indiana. When the BMV took the license branches away from the Hoosier Motor Club in the early '90's, they lost several thousand members - people who had apparently been willing to pay the \$50 or so AAA membership fee simply to avoid long lines at the government run branches.

The current standard of service is simply unacceptable. I don't believe

that we should return to the old political patronage system in the license branches that we had previously, but I do believe that a part of the solution may be to partner with private enterprise to provide these services more efficiently. After all, it worked before.

Ultimately the legislature is going to have to address this issue statewide and provide for a more efficient means of service to license branch customers. In the short term, however, the inefficiencies must be addressed by the O'Bannon administration. It may be that we need more license branches to keep up with the population growth in our area, or it may simply be that the existing branches need to operate more efficiently and effectively. Whatever the short term solution, I believe the administration should act immediately to solve these problems. I have expressed to Governor O'Bannon and to BMV Commissioner Gary Gibson the dissatisfaction that I have heard from district 39 residents regarding license branch service, but I'm still waiting for a response.

※ Here is a portion of a response I received from BMV Commissioner Gary Gibson:

"A new manager was recently added to the staff at this branch site. We expect to see significant improvements in service delivery at this location. Updated computer equipment and more intensive training programs are also being developed to further enhance customer service."

Future Forecasts...Utility Deregulation

Many of you have contacted me recently regarding the issue of utility deregulation. Although we have not had a utility deregulation bill get to the full House during my two terms here, I expect to see a push to pass one during the next couple of sessions. You may have heard about this from Citizens Action Coalition, a lobbying group that has canvassed several neighborhoods in the district soliciting contributions and asking you to contact your legislators.

There have been committee hearings on the issue in the last couple of years, and while I do not serve on the

Commerce Committee, I have been following some of the debate with regard to the deregulation issue. In my view, there are two very important factors to consider in this debate. The first is that any deregulation statute would have to ensure that all consumers, including individual homeowners, would benefit as opposed to any proposal that would benefit only large industrial users at the expense of individual consumers.

Secondly, I would not support any bill that did not guard against an overall leveling of rates nationally that would

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SAFETY on the SCHOOL BUS

The recent firing of a Carmel/Clay school bus driver who was found to be legally intoxicated while driving a bus load of students illustrates the absurdity of legislation that was promoted by labor unions, including the Indiana State Teachers union, in the recent session of the general assembly. If House Bill 1322 had passed, it would have allowed collective bargaining for non-certificated school employees such as cafeteria workers, janitors and bus drivers. The bill spelled out specific discipline and discharge procedures that, in the case of this particular bus driver, would have required that he be given a written warning and a “reasonable time to correct the behavior” before he could even be suspended! The driver could have been fired only after being given a second “reasonable time to correct the behavior” following the suspension.

This bill was heard in the House Committee on Labor and Employment, where I serve as the Ranking Minority Member. During the debate on House Bill 1322, I argued that the lives and well being of our school children are too precious to risk giving some school em-

ployees a second chance. I was astounded to hear the labor unions argue in favor of this proposal.

Most of us would be fired immediately if we even showed up at work intoxicated, let alone driving a school bus full of children while intoxicated. What parent would want their child in a school building or on a bus in the care of a known drug abuser or child molester who was being given a second chance to correct their behavior after a written warning? The employee certainly deserves a second chance at life, but not a second chance transporting our children.

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Predictably, this bill passed out of the labor committee and the full House on party line votes. Fortunately for Hoosier students, House Bill 1322 never received a hearing in the Republican controlled Indiana Senate and has not become law.

I applaud the Carmel/Clay school administration for taking swift action in firing this particular employee. I hope they never find it necessary to make a similar decision regarding another school employee - but if they do, I pray that it is still legal for them to do so.

(Future Forecasts cont.)

adversely affect consumers in Indiana. We have traditionally enjoyed low energy rates in Indiana compared with other parts of the country. I would not want Hoosiers to pay more for their electricity in order for consumers in New York or New Jersey to pay less than they do now.

I have also heard from some who are simply concerned about being interrupted at dinner time by annoying telephone calls asking if you want to change your electricity provider.

Generally, competition is healthy for business - consumers almost always benefit. When it comes to something as fundamental and necessary as electric service, however, we must be careful to ensure that every citizen has access to reasonable and affordable service. As all of this is debated in upcoming sessions of the general assembly, please rest assured that I will carefully evaluate any deregulation proposal, keeping the above factors foremost in mind. ■